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Comptroller General Walker Names 14 Members to Citizens' Health Care Working Group

WASHINGTON, February 28, 2005 – Comptroller General of the United States David M. Walker today is naming 14 members of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group, the first step in a two-year process to hold a national dialogue on issues related to health care services, delivery and cost.

By law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) will serve as the 15th member of the Working Group.

The Working Group was created by Congress to hold hearings and community meetings across the country on health care coverage and cost issues, and to issue a "Health Report to the American People." Within two years from these appointments, it must submit recommendations to Congress and the President.

Walker, who heads the Government Accountability Office (GAO), chose the 14 members from among more than 530 people who applied. The members represent many regions of the country and a broad range of health care perspectives, including consumers, providers, employers and workers. The statute required that the appointments include people with personal experience or expertise in paying for benefits and issues of access to care. Biographies of the 14 members are attached.

Consistent with the underlying purpose of the Working Group, none of the appointees are current or former elected officials or registered lobbyists. In addition, only one of the 14 appointees is from Washington, D.C.

From among the 14, Walker has selected Randall L. Johnson, director of Human Resources Strategic Initiatives for Motorola, to serve as chairman of the Working Group, and Catherine G. McLaughlin, a professor at the University of Michigan's Department of Health Management and Policy, as vice chair.

"This distinguished and diverse group of Americans has accepted a call to address a challenge of great importance to all Americans: How to make quality health care more accessible and affordable to every man, woman and child in an economically rational and fiscally responsible manner," Walker said. "We are extremely grateful for their willingness to serve."

“We need to reexamine every aspect of our health care system, because its current course threatens both our economic and national security,” Walker added. “Many policymakers, industry experts and medical practitioners contend that the health care system – in both the public and private sectors – is in crisis. Long-term spending for health care is driven by both the aging of our population and the rapid growth of health care costs.”

“In the private sector, employers and other private purchasers of health care services find that the soaring cost of health insurance premiums poses a threat to their competitive position in an increasingly global marketplace. In the public sector, although Social Security is currently the largest program in the federal budget, it will soon be eclipsed by Medicare and Medicaid. Our government is on an unsustainable fiscal path, and health care is one of many important priorities that need to be reexamined in a constructive and comprehensive manner,” Walker said.

The Comptroller General was tasked with appointing the members of the Working Group, and will fill vacancies should the need arise. It will have its own executive director and staff, including staffers detailed from the Departments of Labor and HHS.

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For more information, contact GAO’s Office of Public Affairs at (202) 512-4800.

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Citizens' Health Care Working Group

Chair

Randall L. Johnson of Naperville, Illinois, has more than 30 years of experience in corporate benefits. For the last 22 years, he has worked at Motorola, where he led the design of health care benefits for Motorola employees, retirees, and their families. He has been Motorola's director of human resources strategic initiatives since 2000 and has acted as the company's spokesperson on human resources matters. Johnson has served on the boards of the ERISA Industry Committee and the American Benefits Council and is a member of various Business Roundtable committees. He has also worked with the Human Resources Policy Association Affordable Coalition, whose goal is to extend coverage to the uninsured, and has served as an employer advisor to the Wye River Group, which seeks solutions to extend, improve, and market health care coverage. Johnson holds a BA degree from the University of Wisconsin.

Vice Chair

Catherine G. McLaughlin of Ann Arbor, Michigan, is a health economist with more than 21 years of research experience. She is currently a professor in the Department of Health Management and Policy at the University of Michigan, where she also serves as the Director of the Economic Research Initiative on the Uninsured. Previously, she served on the faculty of Tufts University and worked at Georgetown University's Center for Health Policy Studies. McLaughlin has evaluated several health care programs for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and has reviewed Michigan's Medicaid managed care demonstrations. She is a member of the Council on Health Care Economics and Policy and the executive committee of the American Society of Health Economists. McLaughlin has a PhD in economics from the University of Wisconsin. She earned her undergraduate degree from Randolph-Macon Women's College.

Members

Frank J. Baumeister, Jr., of Portland, Oregon, is a physician specializing in gastroenterology and in private practice since 1970. He is past president of the Oregon Medical Association and past chairman of the Oregon Health Resources Commission. Dr. Baumeister has been involved with the Oregon Health Plan Medicaid program, and he is now in private practice with the Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland. He received his MD from University of Miami.

Dorothy A. Bazos of Concord, New Hampshire, is a registered nurse who works as a health policy consultant and an adjunct professor at Dartmouth College. She

currently develops grants for local clinics and social service agencies to help improve access for Medicaid eligible populations, including refugees and immigrants. Bazos

also led a project in New Hampshire for children with chronic health conditions to maximize access and payment of health and social services through Medicaid. Before joining the Dartmouth faculty, Bazos was the associate director for veterans' rural health initiatives in Vermont. She has a PhD from Dartmouth Medical School, an RN from St. Joseph's Hospital, and a BA from American International College.

Montye S. Conlan of Ormond Beach, Florida, is an advocate for the disabled and runs a support group for persons with multiple sclerosis. She is the founder of a one-stop MS center at the Ormond Beach YMCA that educates people on how to live well with the disease. Previously, she was an award-winning science teacher. Conlan received a sci-mat fellowship from the Council for Basic Education in 1993 and a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Math Teaching in 1995. Conlan holds an undergraduate degree from George Washington University.

Richard G. Frank of Boston, Massachusetts, is a professor of health economics at Harvard University Medical School. His recent research has focused on the economics of mental health and substance abuse care; the economics of the pharmaceutical industry; and the organization and financing of physician group practices. Frank is a member of the Institute of Medicine and serves on its behavioral sciences board. He advises several state mental health and substance abuse agencies on issues involving managed care and financing of care. He has a PhD in economics from Boston University and a BA from Bard College.

Joseph T. Hansen of Washington, D.C., is president of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents more than 1.4 million employees in the retail, meat packing, poultry, food processing, manufacturing, and health-care industries and the garment, textile, and distillery trades. The union negotiates hundreds of employment contracts each year involving wages, health care, and pension benefits. Hansen serves on the AFL-CIO Executive Committee on Immigrant Workers and is the president-elect of the Union Network International, a federation of global unions.

Therese A. Hughes of Newbury Park, California, is a government relations and legislative analyst at the Venice Family Clinic, the largest free clinic in the United States. Her outreach efforts to government officials and the public have sought to bring attention to the challenges facing the providers of primary health care to the uninsured. Hughes served as the chair of the Ventura County Grand Jury's Health, Education, and Welfare Committee and was a board member of the Environmental Defense Center in Santa Barbara, California. She has a MA from the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research.

Brent C. James of Salt Lake City, Utah, is a physician and vice president of Intermountain Health Care, a large integrated health care delivery system that includes 22 hospitals and more than 100 outpatient clinics. He oversees care

management protocols and outcomes tracking, working with doctors and nurses to improve patient outcomes while reducing the costs of care. He has 25 years of experience in care delivery and quality improvement research, writing and speaking extensively about clinical improvement, cost control, and health reform. Dr. James

also works as a clinical professor at the University of Utah Medical School, the Harvard School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, and the University of Sydney.

Patricia A. Maryland of Carmel, Indiana, is a hospital administrator with extensive experience in the health care sector. She has worked in various capacities and at several health care facilities, including the Cleveland Clinic and Sinai-Grace Hospital in Detroit. Maryland is now president of St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services, Inc., in central Indiana. She holds a doctorate degree in public health from the University of Pittsburgh.

Rosario Perez of Houston, Texas, is a registered nurse and the director of community outreach at CHRISTUS St. Joseph Hospital, where she runs a mobile health clinic that serves undocumented workers, the elderly, and the indigent. She serves on the Houston Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Committee and was a founding member of the Hispanic Health Coalition of Houston. She has worked with the Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas to increase community participation in clinical studies. Perez also works as a diabetes educator for the blind. In 2004, the Houston Chronicle chose her as one of Houston's top 10 nurses. She holds an undergraduate degree in sociology.

Aaron Shirley of Jackson, Mississippi, is a physician and an associate professor in pediatrics at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Dr. Shirley has led several innovative efforts to deliver health care to medically underserved residents of Mississippi, including a one-stop health care facility in Jackson. He serves on the boards of the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, Tougaloo College, and the Delta Health Cooperative and is a member of the Institute of Medicine. He was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship in 1993. Dr. Shirley received his undergraduate degree from Tougaloo College and his MD from Meharry Medical School.

Deborah R. Stehr of Lake View, Iowa, is a health care advocate and is a full-time care giver for her adult son Jonathan, who has cerebral palsy. On the basis of her extensive first-hand experience with the health care system, Governor Tom Vilsack appointed her to Iowa's Health Consumer Advisory Council. Stehr has also served on the boards of the Iowa Citizen Action Network and USAction.

Christine L. Wright of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has been a registered nurse for 27 years. Her nursing specialty is oncology. She is currently Director of Cancer Services and Radiation Oncology at Sioux Valley Hospital USD Medical Center, a 528-bed facility serving a large rural state. In addition to her nursing credentials, Wright has a masters degree in public administration.

